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ABSTRACT

This module, one is in a series of performance-based teacher education learning packages, focuses on a specific skill that vocational educators need in order to integrate the teaching and reinforcement of basic skills into their regular vocational instruction. The purpose of the module is to give educators skill in assessing students' writing abilities and in motivating them to improve. It also provides a variety of techniques and activities to use to help students improve their writing skills. Introductory material provides terminal and enabling objectives, a list of resources, and general information. The main portion of the module includes three learning experiences based on the enabling objectives. Each learning experience presents learning activities with information sheets, samples, checklists, self checks, and case studies. Optional activities are provided. Completion of these three learning experiences should lead to achievement of the terminal objective presented in the fourth and final learning experience. The latter also provides for a teacher performance assessment by a resource person. An assessment form is included. (YLB)

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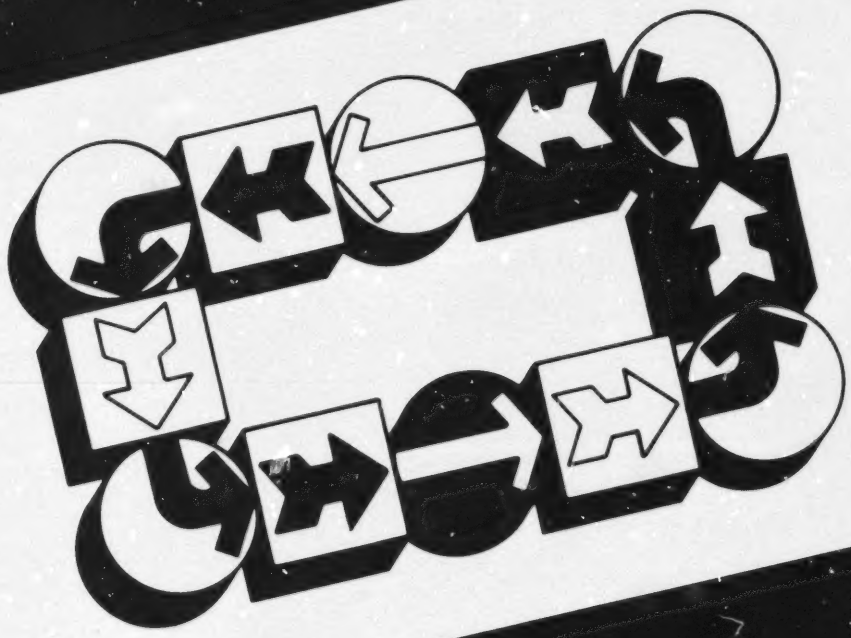
# Assist Students in Improving Their Writing Skills



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# FOREWORD

This module is one of a series of 127 performance-based teacher education (PBTE) learning packages focusing upon specific professional competencies of vocational teachers. The competencies upon which these modules are based were identified and verified through research as being important to successful vocational teaching at both the secondary and postsecondary levels of instruction. The modules are suitable for the preparation of teachers and other occupational trainers in all occupational areas.

Each module provides learning experiences that integrate theory and application; each culminates with criterion-referenced assessment of the teacher's (instructor's, trainer's) performance of the specified competency. The materials are designed for use by teachers-in-training working individually or in groups under the direction and with the assistance of teacher educators or others acting as resource persons. Resource persons should be skilled in the teacher competencies being developed and should be thoroughly oriented to PBTE concepts and procedures before using these materials.

The design of the materials provides considerable flexibility for planning and conducting performance-based training programs for preservice and inservice teachers, as well as business-industry-labor trainers, to meet a wide variety of individual needs and interests. The materials are intended for use by universities and colleges, state departments of education, postsecondary institutions, local education agencies, and others responsible for the professional development of vocational teachers and other occupational trainers.

The PBTE curriculum packages in Category M—Assisting Students in Improving Their Basic Skills—are designed to enable vocational teachers and other occupational trainers to integrate the teaching and reinforcement of basic skills into their regular vocational instruction. The modules are based upon 85 teacher competencies identified as essential for vocational teachers to teach and to reinforce basic communication, computation, and employment skills as part of the ongoing occupational education program.

Many individuals and institutions have contributed to the research, development, testing, and revision of these significant training materials. Appreciation is extended to the following individuals who, as members of the DACUM analysis panel, assisted National Center staff in the identification of the teacher competency statements upon which this category of modules is based: Milton Arnold, Lewis Cain, William Chandler, Jim Frazier, Jackie Marshall, Teresa Paige, Thomas Peterson, Marie Schernitz, and Nancy Underwood.

Field testing of the materials was carried out with the assistance of field-site coordinators, teacher educators, students, directors of staff development, and others at the following institutions: University of Alabama-Birmingham; Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute, New Mexico; University of Central Florida, Dupage Area Vocational Education Authority, Wisconsin; Holland College, P.E.I., Canada; Seminole Community College, Florida; University of Southern Maine; and Temple University, Pennsylvania.

Special recognition for major individual roles in the development of these materials is extended to the following National Center Staff: Lucille Campbell-Thrane, Associate Director, Development Division, and James B. Hamilton, Program Director, for leadership and direction of the project; Lois G. Harrington and Michael E. Wonacott, Program Associates, for module quality control; Cheryl M. Lowry, Research Specialist, for developing illustration specifications; Barbara Shea for art work; Adonia Simandjuntak, Graduate Research Associate, for assistance in field-test data summarization; and Catherine C. King-Fitch and Michael E. Wonacott, Program Associates, for revision of the materials following field testing.

Special recognition is also extended to the staff at AAVIM for their invaluable contributions to the quality of the final printed products, particularly to Donna Pritchett for module layout, design, and final art work, and to George W. Smith, Jr. for supervision of the module production process.

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- Developing educational programs and products.
- Evaluating individual program needs and outcomes.
- Providing information for national planning and policy.
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MODULE
M-3

# Assist Students in Improving Their Writing Skills

Module M-3 of Category M—Assisting Students in Improving Their Basic Skills
PROFESSIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION MODULE SERIES

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# INTRODUCTION

The written word has been a significant method of communication for thousands of years, since people first chiseled symbols in stone to record an event. Today, writing is essential because of our large and diverse population. Putting our thoughts on paper often is a necessary way of communicating. This is particularly true for workers on the job.

Unfortunately, some vocational-technical students have poor writing skills and feel no need to improve them. They believe that they will not be expected to do any writing in their occupation. They think that they will need to be skilled at using their hands only to do such things as prepare meals, repair cars, or operate computers.

However, even in job situations in which writing is not a critical skill, workers will need to fill out forms and write memos, at least occasionally. Consequently, students may need to improve their writing skills in order to get and keep a job. And those who wish to progress in their careers may find that the ability to write is essential to advancement.

Of course, writing contributes to our lives in many ways, both personally and professionally. For example, writing is an excellent exercise in logical thinking and problem solving—skills essential in many technical fields and important to productivity in all fields.

As a vocational-technical teacher, you have or will have the opportunity to assist your students in improving their writing skills. You can help them understand the importance of writing in the world of work. You can identify the areas in which they need improvement and start to work on those points. You will need to stress the basics of grammar, spelling, and punctuation—the skills needed for employment. Developing literary style and technique is not your responsibility.

This module is designed to give you skill in assessing your students' writing abilities and in motivating them to improve. It will also provide you with a variety of techniques and activities that you can use to help students improve their writing skills.

# ABOUT THIS MODULE

## Objectives

**Terminal Objective:** In an actual teaching situation, assist students in improving their writing skills. Your performance will be assessed by your resource person, using the Teacher Performance Assessment Form, p. 35 (*Learning Experience IV*).

**Enabling Objectives:**

1. After completing the required reading, demonstrate knowledge of the important considerations and techniques involved in helping students to improve their writing skills (*Learning Experience I*).
2. Given a case study describing how a teacher assisted students in improving their writing skills, critique the performance of that teacher (*Learning Experience II*).
3. Given a letter of application written by a vocational student, correct and critique that letter (*Learning Experience III*).

## Prerequisites

The modules in category M are **not** designed for the prospective teacher with no prior training and/or experience. They assume that you have achieved a minimal level of **content knowledge** in your occupational specialty and **skill** in the core teacher competencies of instructional planning, execution, and evaluation. They then build on or expand that knowledge and skill level, specifically in terms of assisting students in improving their basic skills.

## Resources

A list of the outside resources that supplement those contained within the module follows. Check with your resource person (1) to determine the availability and the location of these resources, (2) to locate additional references within your occupational specialty, and (3) to get assistance in setting up activities with peers or observations of skilled teachers, if necessary. Your resource person may also be contacted if you have any difficulty with directions or in assessing your progress at any time.

### Learning Experience I

Optional

*Reference*: Leggett, Glenn; Mead, C. David; and Charvat, William. *Prentice-Hall Handbook for Writers*. Eighth Edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982.

*Reference*: Walejko, Charles. *Written Communications*. Stockton, CA: California State Department of Education, 1977.

*A basic writing skills textbook* used in an English or composition program in your school or college that you can use as a reference.

### Learning Experience II

No outside resources

### Learning Experience III

No outside resources

### Learning Experience IV

Required

*An actual teaching situation* in which you can assist students in improving their writing skills.

*A resource person* to assess your competency in assisting students in improving their writing skills.

## General Information

For information about the general organization of each performance-based teacher education (PBTE) module, general procedures for its use, and terminology that is common to all the modules, see About Using the National Center's PBTE Modules on the inside back cover. For more in-depth information on how to use the modules in teacher/trainer education programs, you may wish to refer to three related documents:

The *Student Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials* is designed to help orient preservice and inservice teachers and occupational trainers to PBTE in general and to the PBTE materials.

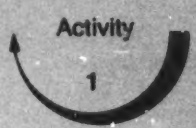
The *Resource Person Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials* can help prospective resource persons to guide and assist preservice and inservice teachers and occupational trainers in the development of professional teaching competencies through use of the PBTE modules. It also includes lists of all the module competencies, as well as a listing of the supplementary resources and the addresses where they can be obtained.

The *Guide to the Implementation of Performance-Based Teacher Education* is designed to help those who will administer the PBTE program. It contains answers to implementation questions, possible solutions to problems, and alternative courses of action.

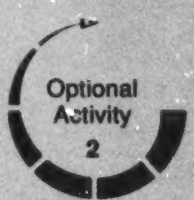
# Learning Experience I

## OVERVIEW

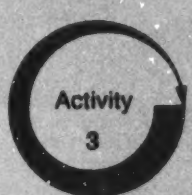
After completing the required reading, demonstrate knowledge of the important considerations and techniques involved in helping students to improve their writing skills.




You will be reading the information sheet, Assisting Students in Improving Their Writing Skills, pp. 6–17.




You may wish to review one or more of the following supplementary references: Leggett et al., *Prentice-Hall Handbook for Writers*; Walejko, *Written Communications*; and/or a basic writing skills textbook used in an English or composition program in your school or college.




You will be demonstrating knowledge of the important considerations and techniques involved in helping students to improve their writing skills by completing the Self-Check, pp. 18–19.

You will be evaluating your competency by comparing your completed Self-Check with the Model Answers, p. 21.

Activity 1

Some of your students may lack the writing skills necessary to gain and retain employment in the world of work. For information on the basic principles and techniques involved in assisting students in improving their writing skills, read the following information sheet.

# ASSISTING STUDENTS IN IMPROVING THEIR WRITING SKILLS

Writing is one of the ways in which people share ideas, facts, and feelings. Although it may seem easier just to talk to others, that is not always practical. Writing a letter may be the best way to communicate with family and friends who live in other cities.

Large corporations frequently have many separate offices that keep in touch by means of written memos and reports. Sometimes it is necessary to leave a written message for a co-worker who's on a coffee break. Whatever the reason, there are occasions when only the written word will do.

Almost daily, most people are called on to do some type of writing. The homemaker prepares a shopping list and writes checks to pay the monthly bills. The worker fills out an order form on the job and submits a written request to take a week of vacation. Students complete written assignments and take written phone messages. These activities are a normal part of daily life.

In addition, people often need to be able to write business letters and fill out forms to apply for insurance, credit cards, and bank loans. Parents need to write absence notes when their children miss school. Clearly, writing has a great deal to do with an individual's everyday existence.

## Writing and Work

The ability to write is a basic skill that is important to all aspects of life, but it may be critical for employability. Initially, prospective employees will need to fill out job application forms and prepare résumés. Once they have been hired, they may be expected to write brief memos, letters, or reports and to fill out certain forms as part of their job. The majority of jobs today call for writing at some time or another.

A clerk in a department store may need to write up a special order for a customer. A carpenter may need to write a work order describing the remodeling work to be done on someone's house. An auto body repairer might need to write a report on accident damage for an insurance company. Most employers consider writing to be a skill basic to employment and may be reluctant to hire those who do not have this skill.

Furthermore, the ability to write may be a deciding factor in whether an employee is promoted. For example, suppose that Leon, a very capable welder in a manufacturing plant, wants to become the supervisor of his department. He thoroughly understands the operation of the department and is well liked and respected by his co-workers.

Leon tells the retiring supervisor of his goal and is encouraged to submit an application. In turn, the company asks him to prepare a written report on any changes he would suggest making in the department. He has some excellent ideas on how to increase productivity, while reducing costs. He eagerly begins to write.

By now, you probably know how this story will end. The welder's report is poorly written and contains many misspelled words and grammatical errors. The personnel director reading the report cannot decipher the good suggestions. Therefore, she recommends that Leon not be promoted to supervisor—because he lacks basic writing skills.

Some jobs require only limited writing, but an employee must be aware of the importance of writing even simple messages carefully so that those who receive the messages will understand them. Even though the writer knows what is meant, the reader may be confused and unable to understand a message without asking questions. To get an idea of how easily a reader can be misled by a message, read the following quotes from insurance forms:

- "A pedestrian hit me and went under my car."
- "I had been driving my car for forty years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident."
- "An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my vehicle, and vanished."
- "The pedestrian had no idea which direction to go, so I ran over him."

These statements probably made perfect sense to the people who wrote them. However, to us they are funny, and we wonder how anyone could make such mistakes.

Even though writing may be only a small part of a worker's job, it is still important. Being able to communicate clearly in writing can make an employee more valuable to the company. Also, it will be an advantage in his or her everyday life.

### Your Role

Generally, vocational-technical education places more emphasis on specific technical training than on basic skills such as writing. The assumption is that students have already acquired the basic skills and now need to train for an occupation. Frequently, this assumption is false. Some students do need assistance in improving their basic skills. You will want to stress the basics when necessary because of their value to students on the job, as well as in daily life.

While your main function is to teach vocational-technical skills, you have a certain responsibility for helping your students to improve their writing skills. Teaching **some** writing skills is a part of the overall process of preparing students for employability. We have noted some of the tasks for which students are likely to need writing skills—filling out job application forms, writing résumés, filling out order forms, preparing memos and reports, and so on.

Since your main purpose is to prepare students for the world of work, you will want them to be qualified in all respects. If they need help with their writing skills, then you should provide that help.

This does not mean that you need to be a certified English teacher or that you need to teach formal units on composition. But you can make writing—taking notes, preparing reports—part of your normal course or program requirements. And you can evaluate this written work not only for its technical accuracy but for the quality of the writing.

First, of course, you must ensure that your own writing skills are adequate. Then, you can identify what writing skills students will need to succeed on the job and what writing skills students possess. Using this information, you can plan activities to help students improve their writing skills so they can become gainfully employed and function effectively in their daily lives.

## What Are the Basic Writing Skills?

Writing is not a single skill. This should become obvious as you consider what you do when you sit down to write a message of some kind. You are really doing several things. First, you must write individual words legibly—spelling and capitalizing them correctly.

Then, you usually combine those words into meaningful phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that fit the form and style of the message you want to write. To do this, you choose appropriate words for your message, put them together using correct grammar, and punctuate them properly. Finally, you review your work to ensure that you have conveyed the message that you intended.

### Write Legibly

Perhaps the most obvious and basic writing skill is producing words that can be read. This is particularly important, of course, if students are writing by hand. If students write in cursive style (i.e., longhand), their penmanship must be clear and easy to read; the same applies if they print. Even if they type their messages, the typing should be accurate and free of obvious erasures or strikeovers.

In many cases, students should decide whether to write in longhand, print, or type on the basis of which they can do most legibly. After all, the best words, put together with the most elegant grammar, are useless if they cannot be read.

## Spell Correctly

Whether students print their messages, write them longhand, or type them, the words must be spelled correctly. Correct spelling is important for two reasons. First, the reader may fail to understand a misspelled word and end up having no idea of what the message says. Or the reader may misinterpret a misspelled word, thinking it is another word entirely. In either case, the message may not be conveyed and work can suffer.

Second, misspelled words often make a poor impression on the reader. For example, what if an application for promotion contains misspelled words—what if the worker misspells the name of the position he/she wants to be promoted to? How will the personnel director react to that? What will retail customers think if the names of products are misspelled on in-store promotional signs? How seriously will the union shop steward consider a grievance form if his/her name is misspelled in the cover memo?

## Capitalize

Everyone should know that the first word in a sentence is always capitalized, no matter what the word is. Furthermore, some words—proper nouns—and abbreviations are always capitalized wherever they appear: *Mr.*, *Ms.*, *Marjorie Smith*, *Ohio*, *Acme Manufacturing*, *United Auto Workers*, for example. Failure to capitalize such words can make the same kind of poor impression on a reader as misspelled words.

In addition, students may need to pay special attention to the use of capital letters in part numbers, item codes, or other ordering devices used by suppliers or manufacturers. Such code numbers often contain letters as well as numbers, and these letters may be either uppercased (i.e., capitalized) or lowercased. It is essential to write such code numbers as they appear in the supplier's or manufacturer's catalogs if the message is to be properly understood.

## Identify Appropriate Form and Style

Legibly written, properly spelled, and correctly capitalized words do not a message make, of course. In writing messages, students must **combine** words to convey a particular thought in a particular way. The nature of the message being written influences how students should go about the task.

Writing a letter of complaint to a company about a product a student is dissatisfied with is not the same as filling out an application for credit terms, for example. Yet both these tasks are writing tasks. Another vital writing skill, therefore, is to identify the form and style appropriate to the message being written.

The **form** of the message is, in very basic terms, the grammatical shape of the message: individual words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs. Depending on the circumstances, the message may consist of one or a combination of these types. A job application form, for example, might call for all these types of responses.

A question concerning how the applicant was referred to the company, for instance, could be answered by writing a **single word** in the appropriate blank: *individual* or *newspaper*. For that matter, many such questions can be answered by simply placing an *X* in a box or blank next to printed choices.

The entry, Place of Birth, could be filled out by writing in a **phrase:** *Toledo, Lucas County, Ohio*. On the other hand, some entries require a complete **sentence** or short **paragraph** in reply (e.g., "What is your career goal?" or "Why are you applying for this position?").

Using the appropriate form for the message being written is very important because of the impression that it could make on the reader. If students are filling in the blanks on a job application form, it would probably be a serious mistake to try to cram whole sentences into the blanks. The personnel director would very likely become impatient trying to read the teeny-tiny handwriting and put the application on the bottom of the pile.

On the other hand, what would that personnel director think if the cover letter accompanying a résumé contained only single words and phrases instead of complete sentences? Again, these application materials would probably end up on the bottom of the pile.

The **style** of the message is basically the tone that it conveys. If a student is writing a letter or memo, for example, the style can be either formal or informal, courteous or discourteous, emotional or matter-of-fact, friendly or distant. Messages can be written in many other styles as well. Each style has its own particular effect on the reader.

Let's say, for instance, that a student is writing a cover letter to send with his/her résumé to different firms. It would probably not be appropriate to begin the letter with the words, "The present missive has as its aim to solicit my employ by your concern."

The style of that sentence is very formal, academic, and out of date. The personnel director would be quite likely to read that one sentence and immediately assume that the applicant is stuffy, pompous, and too intellectual—and the application for a production welding position would go straight to the bottom of the pile.

On the other hand, the student wouldn't do any better by beginning, "I wanna get a job at yer place."

The style of this sentence goes to the other extreme—too informal, ungrammatical, chatty, and casual. It would invite the personnel director to conclude that the applicant lacks basic skills and wouldn't take work very seriously.

It would be much more appropriate simply to begin, "I am writing to obtain a job with your company." This style is clear, straightforward, and businesslike. It is more likely to get the letter put on the top of the stack.

## Choose Appropriate Words

Choosing the right words is essential in setting the tone of a message—its style. Furthermore, the words should not only fit the style the student wishes to use. They should also be accurate, clear, and appropriate for the reader.

The words need to be **accurate** so that the message will be honest and reliable. For example, if a job applicant claims to have "several years' experience" in related work, what does that mean? The word *several* means more than two and fewer than many; in other words, a small amount. If that applicant had 12 years' experience, *several* does not convey that fact. It is not an accurate term. The applicant should have specified that he or she had **12** years' experience.

The accurate use of words requires knowledge of their meanings. Consider the worker who transfers a liquid to an unmarked container. To be safe, he or she labels the container "Incombustible," thinking that word means the same as flammable and inflammable—easily ignited. Yet the word *incombustible* means incapable of being burned. There's a dangerous difference in meanings. Consequently, word accuracy can be critical.

The words students choose for their messages should also be **clear** so that they communicate their meaning. A worker might, for example, write a memo to his/her supervisor suggesting an improvement in some procedure. The message will be clearer if the worker talks about *carrying out* the change instead of *operationalizing* it.

Likewise, a letter of complaint will be more effective if the writer states that the equipment in question *does not work* rather than saying it is *dysfunctional*. In both these examples, either phrasing is technically correct, but the simple, plain English versions are clearer and more likely to convey the message.

Finally, the words chosen should be **appropriate** for the reader—they should be words that the reader is likely to know and understand. Consider, for example, a worker in a highly technical field such as data processing. If that worker needs to write a memo to people in another department in the firm (e.g., sales), it would only be confusing to those readers if the memo is filled with technical data processing jargon.

While the worker might need to use some technical vocabulary, he or she would want to keep it to a minimum, explaining carefully the meaning of any technical words he/she does use. In that way, readers will be much more likely to understand the message that the worker has written.

## Use Correct Grammar

Using correct grammar in writing is important for two reasons. First, incorrect grammar can make a poor impression on the reader, just as misspelled words can. A worker might write a report to his/her supervisor on employee relations in the unit, for example.

If the report contained the sentence, "The workers was all pleased with the pay hike, but I seen a lotta areas that needs improved," the supervisor might well wince. He or she might decide that the worker's observations and recommendations were no better than his/her grammar and, thus, ignore the report.

Second, a written message can sometimes be read in more than one way because of its grammar. A humorous but clear illustration of this point is contained in the following sentence:

- Max sliced bologna with his skinny wife Irma.

Did Max and Irma slice bologna together, one holding the meat and the other the knife? Or did Max take skinny Irma in his hand and use her as the knife?

A more serious example would be the following:

- We discussed worker rapport with the shift supervisors.

Was "worker rapport with the shift supervisors" the subject of the discussion? Or did the shift supervisors sit down with the authors of that sentence and discuss how workers got along with one another? Any time that a message can be read in more than one way, there is a risk that its real meaning will not be understood.

## Punctuate Properly

Written messages also need proper punctuation. There should be a period at the end of each sentence, commas within sentences where appropriate, question marks to indicate questions, and so on. When a written message is not punctuated properly, it can be difficult or impossible to read, as in the following example written by a work supervisor:

> In all Roger Downeys work is of high quality under my supervision he has performed dependable work in many situations that in fact may be his greatest asset as a worker his dependability.

Properly punctuated, the message would read as follows:

> In all, Roger Downey's work is of high quality. Under my supervision, he has performed dependable work in many situations. That, in fact, may be his greatest asset as a worker—his dependability.

You cannot read the unpunctuated version of the message without stopping and starting over several times. The punctuated version, however, can be read straight through without pausing once to figure out how the words fit together.

Students will sometimes even need to use punctuation when they are not writing complete sentences. Consider, for example, the difference between the following two notations made on a job order for repairing an electric typewriter:

- Space bar
- Space bar?

The first notation—with no punctuation—would most likely be taken by a repairer to mean that the space bar is not working properly and should be repaired or replaced. The second—with a question mark—would most likely be taken to mean that the client suspects, but is not sure, that the space bar is the problem. The question mark could make a big difference in what the repairer does to fix the typewriter.

## Review Written Work

The last step in the writing process is to review written work to ensure that it conveys the right message. It is very easy to go slightly or seriously off track in writing something.

A student might set out to write a letter of complaint that was firm but cordial, for example. However, in writing the letter, the student might experience once again the anger he/she felt when the cause of the complaint occurred. This could cause the student to slip out of a cordial tone into an angry one. Even the best of professional writers find that this can happen when they write.

Consequently, students need to learn to reread what they have written when they have finished. They need to go over the form that they have filled out to ensure that their answers are appropriate in form and style, correctly spelled, legibly written, accurate, and clear. They need to reread letters or memos to make sure that the finished product really does sound firm but cordial, polite and respectful, or short and abrupt—whatever tone they intended to convey.

Often students might even need to have someone else review their writing to ensure that it gets the message across. Sometimes a student knows so clearly what he/she meant that he or she will see the meaning when others cannot.

## Identify Students' Writing Needs

The first step that you should take in helping students to improve their basic writing skills is to assess their individual writing needs. You will first need to know what basic writing skills are required for entry into the trade or occupation for which students are training.

Then, you need to assess each student's present level of writing skills, comparing them with the skills required in the world of work. Once you know what skills students **should** have and what skills they **do** have, you can plan the exact help each individual student needs.

### Identify Occupational Requirements

To identify occupational writing requirements, you should review occupational analyses for your specialty area. By examining each task or competency statement, you can determine whether basic writing skills are required in performing the task.

You may find task statements in which writing skills are explicitly stated. In a competency profile for the occupation of executive secretary, for example, you might find the task statement, *Write interoffice memos.* Performing this task would require using all the basic writing skills. You should make a note of such task statements as you identify them.

In other cases, it will be necessary to use your judgment and personal experience in determining whether individual tasks require the use of basic writing skills. As you review each task or competency statement, you can ask yourself one simple question: What, if any, basic writing skills would a worker need in order to perform this task?

You should also review your own personal technical knowledge and experience. Are there other writing tasks, not included in occupational analyses, that workers are **likely** to have to perform in their prospective job settings? Might they have to leave notes for supervisors or co-workers? Will they need to compile lists of supplies to be ordered from the central supply area? Will they need to make and post signs in their work area (e.g., Wet Paint, Floor Slippery When Wet, Construction Area, Out of Order)?

As you determine students' occupational writing requirements, you should remember that not all students will necessarily need to meet the same requirements. Different students may have different career goals. Consequently, they will be working to achieve different sets of occupational competencies. Hence, you may need to determine students' occupational writing requirements individually.

Your own goal and responsibility, of course, is to help your students achieve the basic writing skills they will **need** for entry into the world of work. If individual students only need to be able to write legibly and use correct spelling, your obligation could end there.

On the other hand, you should always be willing to help your students achieve the level of basic writing skills they want. If students want to go beyond minimal occupational requirements, you should by all means provide them with the opportunity to do so. Certainly you should never discourage a student's desire to go beyond the bare minimum.

Furthermore, a student who is competent in all basic writing skills will probably be more employable than the student with minimal skills. And, in most occupational areas, some writing skill is required of workers who wish to advance to managerial levels. Thus, improvement in writing skills will never be wasted, even in a strict vocational preparation sense.

## Assess Students' Writing Skills

Assessing students' writing skills is an easier task than it sounds. For example, at the beginning of your program, you could ask students to write a short report on why they decided to enter the program. This written assignment will serve two purposes. It will provide background information, and it will tell you in what areas of writing your students may need improvement.

You could also develop a one-page information form for students to fill out when they enter your program. The form could require some responses that are single words, some that are short phrases, and some that are complete sentences. This would allow you to check spelling, punctuation, and so on. In addition, it would allow you to assess students' skill in identifying the appropriate writing form and style to use.

As you assess students' writing skills, you may wish to use a checklist as a guide. Sample 1 provides an example of such a checklist that you could adapt to the requirements of your own occupational area. By checking off each item in the checklist, you can identify a student's writing weaknesses.

For example, suppose a student rates *well* in most categories. However, you discover that the student has difficulty in choosing words and using them correctly. Now that you know the problem, you can begin to help the student improve his/her writing skills.

In addition, you can assist students in using self-evaluation techniques to determine their own writing ability. You could show students how to use the writing checklist so that they can check their own written work. You could show them how to look up difficult words in the dictionary to find out whether they have spelled them correctly.

Such activities can help students assess their own writing skills and locate any problem areas. Students may be more willing to accept the fact that their writing needs improvement if they locate the problem areas themselves. Consequently, they may be more enthusiastic about trying to improve their writing skills.

SAMPLE 1

## WRITING SKILLS CHECKLIST

| | Yes | No | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The student's writing is legible | ☐ | ☐ | |
| 2. All words are correctly spelled | ☐ | ☐ | |
| 3. Words are capitalized correctly | ☐ | ☐ | |
| 4. The form of the writing is appropriate to the circumstances | ☐ | ☐ | |
| 5. The style of the writing is appropriate to the situation | ☐ | ☐ | |
| 6. The words used are: | | | |
| a. accurate | ☐ | ☐ | |
| b. clear | ☐ | ☐ | |
| c. appropriate for the reader | ☐ | ☐ | |
| 7. The writing is grammatically correct | ☐ | ☐ | |
| 8. The writing is properly punctuated | ☐ | ☐ | |

## Improve Students' Writing Skills

Once you have diagnosed your students' writing problems, you are ready to start helping them. The first step is to **motivate students to want to improve** their writing skills. They may not be concerned about improving if they don't see a relationship between their ability to write and their future in the world of work.

For example, a young woman who plans to be a welder may not realize that she will have to perform writing tasks. Therefore, the instructor would need to make sure that this student understands the importance of writing in her occupational area. Perhaps she will need to fill out a time card, order supplies, or prepare an accident report if someone is injured on the job.

You can inform students about the importance of writing by holding class discussions and talking about the kinds of writing that will be expected on the job. Furthermore, you can show students examples of typical work-related writing—memos, letters, and reports. The point is to convince them that they must have adequate writing skills in order to succeed in the job market.

Second, you can **serve as a role model** to encourage students to improve their writing skills. As a professional trained in the vocational area, you should be capable of doing the writing necessary for that area. In addition, you do a great deal of writing that is associated with the educational process—student evaluations, quarterly reports, and so on. You also probably write notes on the chalkboard and prepare handouts for students to read.

By making sure that your writing skills are adequate, you will be setting a good example for students. They will see that you care about expressing yourself correctly and may tend to imitate you.

Remember that you probably have a significant amount of influence on your students. They look to you for information on what it's really like in the world of work. If you frequently misspell words or omit punctuation, they will think that such behavior is acceptable. On the other hand, if you strive to write correctly, they will be inclined to follow your example.

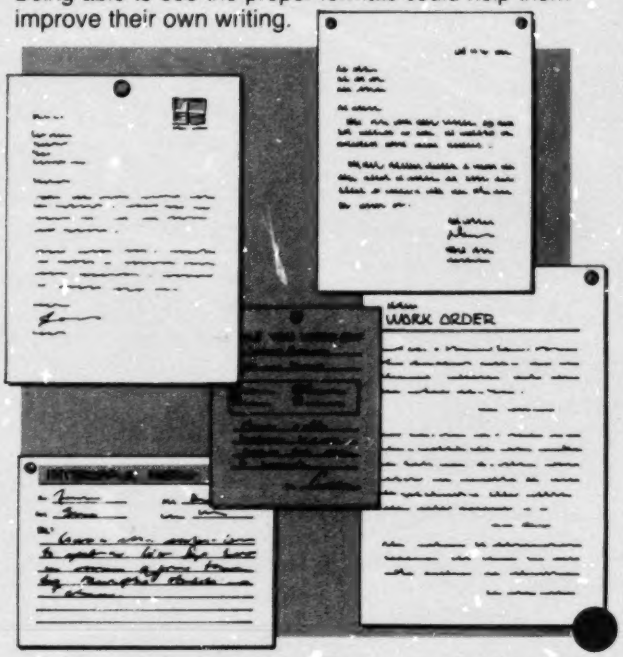
## Techniques to Improve Writing

There are a variety of specific techniques that you can use to help students improve their writing skills. These techniques can be divided into four categories: (1) provide model formats for written materials; (2) provide vocationally related writing assignments; (3) individualize writing instruction; and (4) correct students' writing errors. You can use any or all of these techniques, depending on the needs of your students.

**Provide models.** One very effective way to assist students with their writing is to give them models to follow. Keep in mind that any samples should be related to the kinds of writing that workers do in your vocational area. For example, if your students will be expected to write out work orders, then you could give them examples of several properly completed forms. Or, you could prepare brief memos if that is the kind of writing they will be doing.

Perhaps your students will be writing more detailed reports on the job. In that case, you might want to provide them with examples of well-written lead sentences and introductory paragraphs. Another good activity is to give students paragraphs with the topic sentence missing. Their task would be to write a new lead sentence to introduce each paragraph. Exercises such as this can help students understand the importance of putting their thoughts in a logical order. Furthermore, they can get practice in writing complete sentences.

You might want to create a special writing corner and post examples of model formats. You could include samples of memos, reports, business letters, work orders, or whatever types of written materials students might be expected to produce. Then, students would be able to refer to them at any time. Being able to see the proper formats could help them improve their own writing.




You could also display a variety of model writing samples. By reading what others have written, students can gain knowledge of writing styles and techniques. They can see many different ways to phrase sentences and construct paragraphs. They can compare the samples to their own written work.

In addition, students need to realize that there are writing standards that they should follow. Therefore, all examples provided must be well written and grammatically correct. Words should be properly spelled and all necessary punctuation should be included. As a result, students will be constantly reminded of the standards and should be more inclined to write correctly.

You might want to hang up a poster that lists the various writing standards. For example, on one side of the poster, you could show properly spelled words, complete sentences, and necessary punctuation—the *do's*. The other side could show the incorrect versions—the *don'ts*. Students then would be able to quickly compare their work with the posted samples.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**Provide vocationally related writing assignments.** Most students will be more interested in writing if the topics are related to their vocational area—if they can see some connection between the writing assignment and their future jobs.

One option is to have students write directions for completing occupational tasks. For example, printing students who are learning to operate an offset press could write directions for running the press. Putting the process on paper could help them understand it better and also give them practice in writing.

Another possibility is to have students write short reports on topics related to their special vocational interests. One student might be interested in identifying unusual careers in the vocational area. Another might want to learn more about additional training or advancement possibilities. You should encourage students to do independent research on the topics that interest them personally and to develop written reports on what they discover.

For example, a student in auto mechanics might be fascinated by antique cars. She could do some research and then prepare a written report on why old cars are valuable. In that way, she would be improving her writing skills, while gaining more information about her future occupation and her own special interest.

Or you could encourage students to write for free materials and catalogs offered by business, industry, or the government. This activity can give them experience in writing proper business letters. You might want to review the letters in class to make sure they follow accepted format. You could also refer students to the sample letters you have posted in the writing corner.

To write about their vocations, of course, students need to know various technical words. They need to be able to describe tasks and situations in the language of the occupation. One way to help students do this is to have them keep lists of words related to the occupation. Then they can refer to the lists when they are writing letters or papers.

Keep in mind that students must be able to spell the technical words correctly. You can help them to improve their spelling by encouraging them to look up difficult words in the dictionary. Perhaps each student could keep a list of all the words he or she frequently misspells.

You could also keep a list of the words commonly misspelled by the class. You could focus on one of these words each day so that students will learn its spelling. You could write the word on the board and leave it there throughout class. Or you could ask students to write the word five times to fix the correct spelling in their minds. Any practice you provide can help students improve their spelling ability and, as a result, their writing skills.

**Individualize writing instruction.** Students' writing proficiency will differ. Some may write very well, while others may have many difficulties. Still others may have only minor problems. Therefore, you will need to tailor your instruction to the specific needs of each student.

You will waste valuable time if you put a lot of emphasis on teaching a writing skill that only a few students lack. One solution is to work with the whole class only on general problem areas, such as vocabulary and spelling. Then you can help individuals improve their writing ability while other students are working on different projects.

Working with students on an individual level may put them at ease and help them improve faster. Some students may be self-conscious about their poor writing skills and may not want to participate in group activities. If you can help them privately with their particular problems, they may be more willing to cooperate.

You can devise writing activities for these students to work on individually that are not only instructional but also fun. For example, students could draw from a box of index cards on which unpunctuated sentences had been written. Then they could write out the sentences and correctly punctuate them.

Another possibility is to give students index cards with sentence fragments written on them and have the students complete each sentence. The sentence fragments should be related to your vocational area so that students can improve their knowledge of the occupation while improving their writing skills.

In addition, you could give students copies of scrambled paragraphs, in which the sentences are out of order. Their task would be to put the sentences in proper sequence and create a logical paragraph. Or you could prepare a deck of vocationally related vocabulary words and give several cards to each student. Then, the students would be expected to use the words correctly in a short written assignment.

Keep in mind that activities such as these can be enjoyable **and** educational. As a result, students' writing skills may improve.

**Correct students' writing errors.** Models of good writing and practice activities are not enough. It is also important to correct students' writing errors in such areas as spelling, clarity, punctuation, and grammar. They need to know in what areas they have improved and what areas still need work. Their writing skills will continue to improve if you praise them for their efforts and help them pinpoint their weak spots.

Students perform better when they experience success and receive some encouragement. Thus, it is probably a good idea to concentrate on only one area at a time so success is possible. Tell students what they did right, where they can improve, and how they can improve. Offer praise for any accomplishments, such as a difficult word that was spelled correctly.

As an aid in correcting students' papers, you may want to use standard proofreaders' marks (see sample 2). These marks can help you make corrections more quickly and uniformly. They are easy to use and almost self-explanatory. Of course, you need to give copies of the proofreaders' marks to students so they will understand the corrections you make on their papers.

You could also encourage students to use the marks when checking their own written assignments for errors. Proofreading their own papers is an excellent way for students to become more aware of writing errors. You should require students to check for spelling and typing errors and to make sure that they have stated the facts correctly—just as they will be expected to do on the job.

You also might want to give students samples of poorly written materials to critique. Their task would be to find the errors and correct them. Students probably would learn a great deal from being on the other end of the red pencil. They would have the opportunity to identify different mistakes and to decide on what the proper style should be.

As you can see, there are many ways to help your students improve their writing skills within the scope of your regular instruction. These activities need not take a lot of time away from your usual program content. They can fit easily into individualized and group activities that are already going on. Often, it is just a matter of focusing on **how** students' work is written—in addition to **what** is written.

You may wish to refresh your own writing skills by reviewing one or more of the following supplementary references: Leggett et al., *Prentice-Hall Handbook for Writers*; Walejko, *Written Communications*, and/or a basic writing skills textbook used in an English or composition program in your school or college.

SAMPLE 2

# PROOFREADERS' MARKS

There are two types of proofreaders' marks: one for editing original copy and one for correcting typeset copy. You should use the former type. Corrections are indicated in or above the line in which the error occurs, as follows:

| Error | Symbol | Example | Example Corrected |
|---|---|---|---|
| Letters or words should be closed up | ⁀ | any one; colo red | anyone; colored |
| Space needs to be inserted | # | alot; none | a lot; no one |
| Letter should be capitalized | ≡ | mrs. Mathis | Mrs. Mathis |
| Letter should be lowercased | / | facing North | facing north |
| Should begin new paragraph | ¶ | Another type is the business letter. | Another type is the business letter. |
| Letter or word should be deleted (eliminated) | ℘ | I worked all summer in in an factory. | I worked all summer in a factory. |
| Letter, word, phrase, etc., should be inserted | ^ | I can't complete required project. | I didn't complete the required project. |
| Letters or words are in the wrong order (transposed) | ⌇ | She made a mistake in change making. | She made a mistake in making change. |
| Abbreviation or symbol should be spelled out | ○ | The jobs were in elec. | The two job... in electronics. |
| Underlining should be eliminated | ~~~ | I refuse to comply. | I refuse to comply. |

If a large amount of text should be deleted (e.g., a phrase, sentence, or paragraph), you can simply indicate so by drawing a line through it by drawing a line through it.

When you insert needed punctuation, it is a good idea to use the recommended proofreaders' symbols with the punctuation. These are designed to make the corrections stand out clearly.

This is how you should indicate punctuation such as commas, semicolons, and colons: you use carets, as follows.

This is how you should indicate punctuation such as apostrophes and quotation marks: "Isn't that incredible," she said.

And this is how you make sure that students know that they should insert a period.

Finally, if you cross out something you didn't mean to, you can indicate that it should not be deleted by writing the word *stet* above the line and putting dots under the copy to be retained. Not that you will ever make such a mistake.

stet

The following items check your comprehension of the material in the information sheet, Assisting Students in Improving Their Writing Skills, pp. 6–17. Each of the four items requires a short essay-type response. Please explain fully, but briefly, and make sure you respond to all parts of each item.

## SELF-CHECK

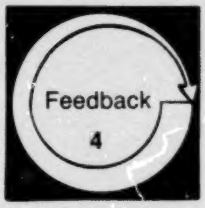
1. What would you say to a student who told you that writing was not necessary in his/her future occupation?

2. Why is it important to assess students' writing abilities?

3. As a role model, how can you influence students' desire to improve their writing skills?

4. What is the value of providing students with vocationally related writing assignments?

# NOTES




Compare your written responses to the self-check items with the model answers given below. Your responses need not exactly duplicate the model responses; however, you should have covered the same **major** points.

## MODEL ANSWERS

1. Students will need to do at least some writing in all occupations. If the job does not call for preparing reports and memos, it will probably call for filling out a time sheet or a vacation request. Furthermore, students can't expect to be hired for any job if they are unable to complete an employment application.

   In their personal lives, students will need to write checks, apply for credit cards or loans, and fill out tax forms. Whatever their future positions in life, students will need basic writing skills to succeed.

2. You need to know what kinds of writing problems your students have before you can help them. Therefore, you need to assess their current writing ability and determine whether they have difficulty with skills such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, and clarity. Then, you can work on the problem areas rather than spend valuable time teaching skills they already have.

   Also, once you have assessed their writing ability, you can individualize instruction and help each student with his/her specific weak points.

3. Most students look upon the teacher as an example of how to perform in the vocational area. They see what the teacher does and then copy his/her behavior. Consequently, you can greatly influence students to want to improve their writing skills.

   If you are careful to use proper grammar and to spell and punctuate correctly, your students are more likely to view those skills as important. If you explain why adequate writing skills are valuable assets in the world of work, they are more likely to see the relevance of these skills to their own lives.

4. Students enrolled in a vocational program usually have a great deal of interest in that area. They generally plan to pursue careers in that field and may have related hobbies. As a result, they will respond more enthusiastically to writing assignments that relate to the occupation. They can see a connection between the writing and their future lives.

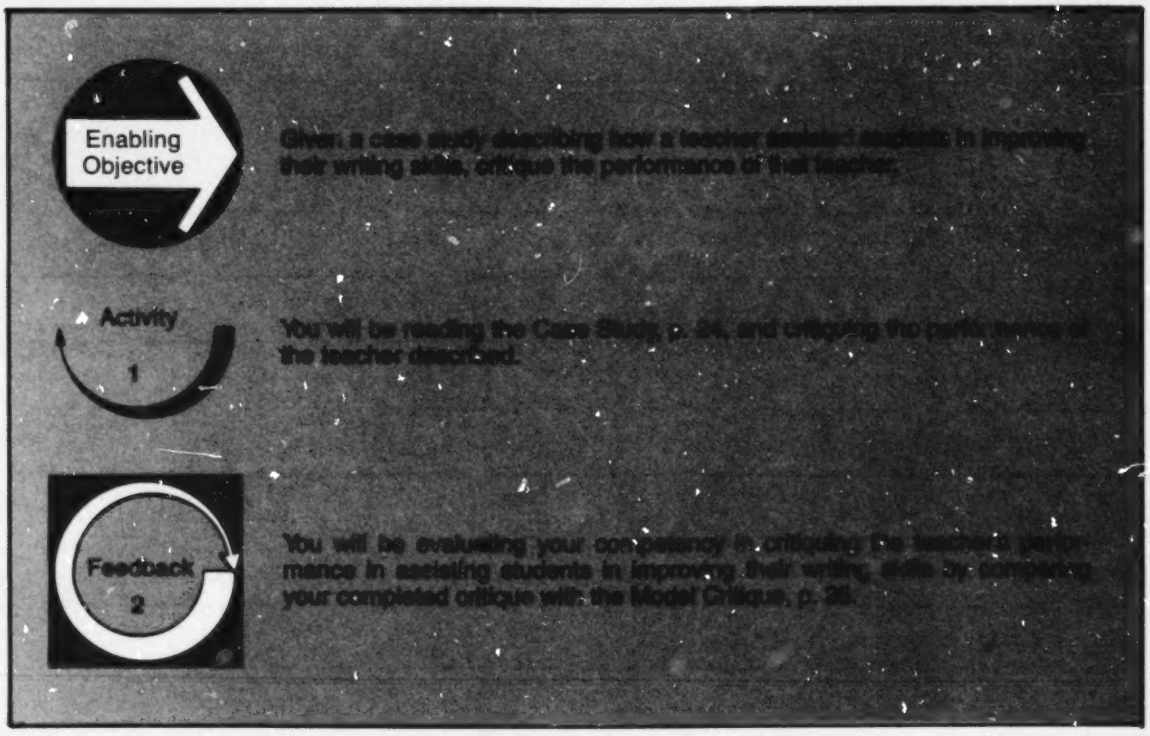
   If they enjoy the kinds of writing assignments you give, they will be more likely to complete the work. The end result will be that the students have the opportunity to practice writing and improve their skills.

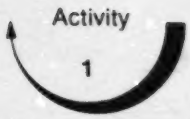
**Level of Performance:** Your written responses to the self-check items should have covered the same **major** points as the model answers. If you missed some points or have questions about any additional points you made, review the material in the information sheet, Assisting Students in Improving Their Writing Skills, pp. 6–17, or check with your resource person if necessary.

# NOTES

# Learning Experience II

**OVERVIEW**


Enabling Objective
Given a case study describing how a teacher assisted students in improving their writing skills, critique the performance of that teacher.
Activity 1
You will be reading the Case Study, p. 24, and critiquing the performance of the teacher described.
Feedback 2
You will be evaluating your competency in critiquing the teacher's performance in assisting students in improving their writing skills by comparing your completed critique with the Model Critique, p. 26.




The following case study describes how a vocational teacher, Audrey Jensen, approached the task of helping students to improve their writing skills. As you read, try to determine what Audrey is doing right and what she is doing wrong. Then **prepare a written critique** of Audrey's performance, explaining (1) the strengths of her approach, (2) the weaknesses of her approach, and (3) how she might have improved on her approach.

## CASE STUDY

At the beginning of the program, Audrey Jensen has her vocational students write short reports on why they entered the program. Then she uses the reports to determine how well they can write and what areas may need improvement. Once she knows her students' capabilities, she tries to help them become more skilled writers.

Audrey believes that it is very important for students to be able to spell and punctuate correctly. She wants them to understand the value of written communication.

Reading is one of her favorite hobbies, and she appreciates fine literary style and technique. In class, she often cites well-written sentences and phrases from literature. She feels that students will want to improve their writing if they are exposed to good writing. She encourages them to read more and is disappointed that only a few do so.

Over the years, Audrey has developed several activities that are designed to help students improve their writing skills. She is fond of having them write lead sentences for paragraphs. Also, she gives periodic tests on spelling and quizzes on punctuation and grammar.

Several times a year she has them write reports on topics of their choice. Her intention is to give students more practice in developing their thoughts and putting them on paper. When grading the reports, she puts a great deal of emphasis on proper writing style and technique.

As a constant reminder to students, Audrey posts examples of good writing on the bulletin board. She put up several short poems by Robert Frost, an excerpt from *Moby Dick*, and a copy of a letter by Eleanor Roosevelt. Periodically, she changes the samples in order to maintain student interest. When asked by a student why she used examples of poetry and *Moby Dick*, she replied, "If you study the masters, you will be able to write everything better."

Compare your written critique of the teacher's performance with the model critique given below. Your responses need not exactly duplicate the model response; however, you should have covered the same **major** points.

## MODEL CRITIQUE

Audrey was correct in assessing her students' writing abilities at the beginning of the program. She realized that she needed to know their problem areas before she could begin to help them. However, her attempts to assist them in improving their writing skills were more complicated than necessary.

First, she provided students with samples of good writing that were selected from literature. These examples were in no way related to the vocational program. Furthermore, they were most likely not the kinds of writing that students would be expected to do on the job.

Audrey selected samples of writing she enjoyed, rather than what would probably have been of more interest to her students. She should have posted examples of office memos, work orders, job application forms, short reports—anything written for her own occupational program.

Second, she was wrong to assume that merely exposing students to good writing would encourage them to want to improve their own skills. Students very often need to see a relationship between what they study in class and what they will be doing on the job.

Audrey should have explained why adequate writing skills are important: initially, to apply for the job; then, to communicate with supervisors and coworkers; and last, to gain promotions. Students will be more motivated to improve if they understand the reasons.

Third, to help students with their writing, Audrey used some good activities, such as having them write reports on topics of their choice. However, she stressed literary style and technique instead of the basics.

Finally, when she worked on grammar, spelling, and punctuation she did so with group quizzes. Using individual exercises as well could have made the material more interesting and learnable for students.

Audrey wanted to help her students improve their writing, but she tried to work on skills they probably didn't need. Had she checked occupational analyses for her field, she would have known which basic writing skills they really needed. Her students probably do not need to develop a classic literary style and technique in order to be able to write adequately on the job.

**Level of Performance:** Your written critique of the teacher's performance should have covered the same **major** points as the model critique. If you missed some points or have questions about any additional points you made, review the material in the information sheet, Assisting Students in Improving Their Writing Skills, pp. 6–17, or check with your resource person if necessary.

# NOTES

# Learning Experience III

**OVERVIEW**

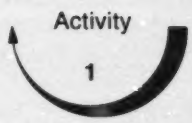
Given a letter of application written by a vocational student, correct and critique that letter.

You will be reading the Letter of Application, p. 28, and correcting the letter.

You will be comparing your completed correction of the application letter with the Model Corrections, pp. 29–30.

You will be writing a critique of the application letter.

You will be comparing your completed critique of the application letter with the Model Critique, pp. 31–32.




Read the following hypothetical application letter, written by a graduating vocational student. As you read, note the errors the student made in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and format. Then, **correct in writing** the errors in the letter, using the standard proofreaders' marks illustrated in sample 2, p. 17. Do not at this point make any major revisions in style or content.

## LETTER OF APPLICATION

Arthur Brown

Personnel Director

Acme Company

315 Main Street

Henderson, Ohio

Dear Mr. Brown

I'm graduating from Jones Vocational high school and want a job. I hear your companys looking for people like me, I'm a pretty good student. I learn to run machines. I can fix some to.

I've had some summer jobs but not in your kinda business. I will work hard for you. I can start work right after schools out. I have a car and can get their on time. I will work nights.

I'd be a good worker. You get your money worth. You should hire me.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Dixon

Compare the corrections you made on the application letter with the model corrections given below. Your corrections should exactly duplicate the model corrections.

## MODEL CORRECTIONS

Return Address
Date

Mr.
^ Arthur Brown

Personnel Director

Acme Company

315 Main Street

Henderson, Ohio zip code

Dear Mr. Brown:

I'm graduating from Jones Vocational high school and want a job. I hear your company's is looking for people like me. I'm a pretty good student. I have learned to run machines. I can fix some to.

I've had some summer jobs but not in your kind of business. I will work hard for you. I can start work right after school's is out. I have a car and can get there on time. I will work nights.

I'd be a good worker. You would get your money's worth. You should hire me.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Dixon

**Level of Performance:** Your corrections should have exactly duplicated the model corrections. If you missed any errors or have questions about any additional corrections you made, review the material in the information sheet, Assisting Students in Improving Their Writing Skills, pp. 6-17, or check with your resource person if necessary.

Next, **develop a written critique** of the Letter of Application, p. 28. Your critique should focus on the form, style, and wording of the letter. Use the following questions to guide you:

- Overall, how good a job did Jimmy do in writing his letter? Was the letter persuasive and effective?
- Was the form of the writing appropriate to the task?
- Was the style of writing appropriate to the task?
- Was the wording of the letter appropriate to the task?
- What techniques could you use to help Jimmy improve the effectiveness of his letter writing?

Compare your written critique of the letter of application with the model critique given below. Your response need not exactly duplicate the model response; however, you should have covered the same **major** points.

## MODEL CRITIQUE

Jimmy did make some good points in his letter: that he's a good student; has some skills related to working with machines; has some work experience; knows the importance of hard work and punctuality; is available for night shifts; and so on.

Furthermore, the form in which Jimmy wrote—complete sentences and paragraphs—was appropriate to the task. And each paragraph does center on a single main thought. He covered his training in the first paragraph. He discussed his work-related qualifications in the second paragraph. And he presented a logical conclusion—please hire me—in the third paragraph.

The style—the tone—in which Jimmy wrote was meant to be appropriate as well. He tried to make the tone of his letter plain, simple, straightforward, and businesslike. Those qualities are just what is called for in such a piece of business correspondence.

However, his letter would probably not persuade a prospective employer to hire him—for several reasons. First, the letter does not contain enough **specific** information to convince an employer that he would meet the company's needs.

He says he is graduating and that he can start work as soon as school is out. However, he fails to mention the specific date of graduation. He says he's a pretty good student. How good? What is his grade average? Has he attached his grade records? Can they be obtained from the school? Jimmy doesn't say.

He wants a job, but rather than simply asking for a job (any job?), Jimmy should have mentioned the specific job he was seeking with the company. He placed the burden of deciding where he belonged on the personnel director. That individual might not consider Jimmy for a job simply because his request was too general.

Jimmy should have talked more about his qualifications and what he had to offer the company. He will be a trained graduate of a **particular** vocational program with **specific** experience in the labor market. His summer jobs have probably taught him responsibility and how to follow directions. Explaining these facts in more detail could have made Jimmy a more appealing candidate.

He should also have been more specific in his first paragraph when he talked about running and fixing machines. It would have been appropriate to name some of the specific machines that he had learned to operate and repair. Naming specific equipment could have made Jimmy's letter more persuasive. He could easily have done so without becoming too technical for the reader—the personnel director.

Second, Jimmy's lack of basic writing skills hurts the effectiveness of his letter. Given the brevity of the letter, there is a high proportion of errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The use of casual terms such as *kinda* is also a problem. A personnel director would have to wonder how strong Jimmy's basic skills really are, given the quality of this letter.

Perhaps worse, the personnel director might assume that Jimmy didn't spend much time or effort on this letter. He might, therefore, question the seriousness of Jimmy's interest in securing employment with the company.

Jimmy needs your assistance in **developing** his thoughts logically and in putting them into words. You could help by giving him a sample of a well-written letter of application. Or you could discuss in class the basic principles of writing letters. All students could benefit from knowing the correct format and how to write effectively about themselves.

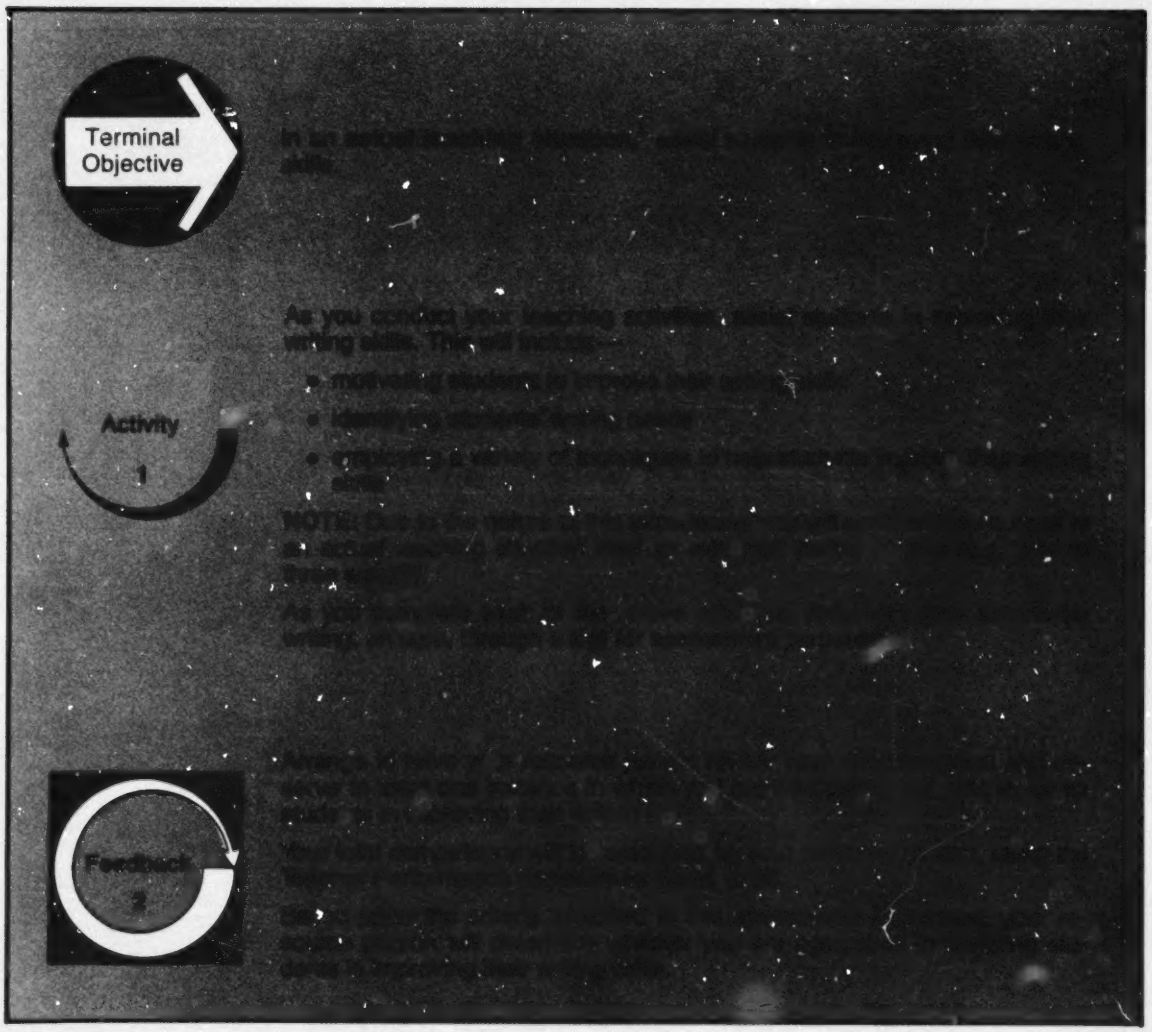
To help Jimmy develop his thoughts more clearly and logically, you could also give him exercises such as paragraph scrambles or provide a topic sentence and ask him to finish the paragraph.

Finally, you could help Jimmy considerably by convincing him that he needs to proof the materials he writes.

**Level of Performance:** Your critique of the letter of application should have covered the same **major** points as the model critique. If you missed some points or have questions about any additional points you made, review the material in the information sheet, Assisting Students in Improving Their Writing Skills, pp. 6–17, or check with your resource person if necessary.

# Learning Experience IV

**FINAL EXPERIENCE**




*For a definition of "actual teaching situation," see the inside back cover.

# NOTES

# TEACHER PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FORM

Assist Students in Improving Their Writing Skills (M-3)

Name _____

Date _____

Resource Person _____

**Directions:** Indicate the level of the teacher's accomplishment by placing an X in the appropriate box under the LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE heading. If, because of special circumstances, a performance component was not applicable, or impossible to execute, place an X in the N/A box.

| | LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N/A | None | Poor | Fair | Good | Excellent |
| **In motivating students to improve their writing skills, the teacher:** | | | | | | |
| 1. discussed writing as a skill necessary to gain employment | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 2. discussed writing as a possible criterion for promotion on the job | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 3. described the ability to write as a valuable communication tool | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| **In identifying students' writing needs, the teacher:** | | | | | | |
| 4. reviewed occupational analyses for his/her vocational area | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 5. compared students' skills to entry-level job requirements | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 6. determined students' writing weaknesses (e.g., grammar, spelling) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 7. assisted students in using self-evaluation techniques | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| **In helping students to improve their writing skills, the teacher:** | | | | | | |
| 8. served as a role model of good writing skills | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 9. provided model formats and standards for written materials | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 10. provided vocationally related writing assignments | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 11. provided writing assignments related to students' special vocational interests | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 12. individualized writing instruction | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 13. corrected students' writing errors | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| 14. encouraged students to proofread and correct their writing | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | | |

**Level of Performance:** All items must receive N/A, GOOD, or EXCELLENT responses. If any item receives a NONE, POOR, or FAIR response, the teacher and resource person should meet to determine what additional activities the teacher needs to complete in order to reach competency in the weak area(s).

NOTES

# ABOUT USING THE NATIONAL CENTER'S PBTE MODULES

### Organization

Each module is designed to help you gain competency in a particular skill area considered important to teaching success. A module is made up of a series of learning experiences, some providing background information, some providing practice experiences, and others combining these two functions. Completing these experiences should **enable** you to achieve the **terminal** objective in the final learning experience. The final experience in each module always requires you to demonstrate the skill in an actual teaching situation when you are an intern, a student teacher, an inservice teacher, or occupational trainer.

### Procedures

Modules are designed to allow you to individualize your teacher education program. You need to take only those modules covering skills that you do not already possess. Similarly, you need not complete any learning experience within a module if you already have the skill needed to complete it. Therefore, before taking any module, you should carefully review (1) the introduction, (2) the objectives listed on p. 4, (3) the overviews preceding each learning experience, and (4) the final experience. After comparing your present needs and competencies with the information you have read in these sections, you should be ready to make one of the following decisions:

- That you do not have the competencies indicated and should complete the entire module
- That you are competent in one or more of the enabling objectives leading to the final learning experience and, thus, can omit those learning experiences
- That you are already competent in this area and are ready to complete the final learning experience in order to "test out"
- That the module is inappropriate to your needs at this time

When you are ready to complete the final learning experience **and** have access to an actual teaching situation, make the necessary arrangements with your resource person. If you do not complete the final experience successfully, meet with your resource person and arrange to (1) repeat the experience or (2) complete (or review) previous sections of the module or other related activities suggested by your resource person before attempting to repeat the final experience.

Options for recycling are also available in each of the learning experiences preceding the final experience. Any time you do not meet the minimum level of performance required to meet an objective, you and your resource person may meet to select activities to help you reach competency. This could involve (1) completing parts of the module previously skipped, (2) repeating activities, (3) reading supplementary resources or completing additional activities suggested by the resource person, (4) designing your own learning experience, or (5) completing some other activity suggested by you or your resource person.

### Terminology

**Actual Teaching Situation:** A situation in which you are actually working with and responsible for teaching secondary or postsecondary vocational students or other occupational trainees. An intern, a student teacher, an inservice teacher, or other occupational trainer would be functioning in an actual teaching situation. If you do not have access to an actual teaching situation when you are taking the module, you can complete the module **up to** the final learning experience. You would then complete the final learning experience later (i.e., when you have access to an actual teaching situation).

**Alternate Activity or Feedback:** An item that may **substitute** for required items that, due to special circumstances, you are unable to complete.

**Occupational Specialty:** A specific area of preparation within a vocational service area (e.g., the service area Trade and Industrial Education includes occupational specialties such as automobile mechanics, welding, and electricity).

**Optional Activity or Feedback:** An item that is not required but is designed to **supplement** and enrich the required items in a learning experience.

**Resource Person:** The person in charge of your educational program (e.g., the professor, instructor, administrator, instructional supervisor, cooperating/supervising/classroom teacher, or training supervisor who is guiding you in completing this module.

**Student:** The person who is receiving occupational instruction in a secondary, postsecondary, or other training program.

**Vocational Service Area:** A major vocational field: agricultural education, business and office education, marketing and distributive education, health occupations education, home economics education, industrial arts education, technical education, or trade and industrial education.

**You or the Teacher/Instructor:** The person who is completing the module.

### Levels of Performance for Final Assessment

**N/A:** The criterion was not met because it was **not applicable** to the situation.

**None: No attempt** was made to meet the criterion, although it was relevant.

**Poor:** The teacher is unable to perform this skill or has only **very limited ability** to perform it.

**Fair:** The teacher is unable to perform this skill in an acceptable manner but has **some ability** to perform it.

**Good:** The teacher is able to perform this skill in an **effective** manner.

**Excellent:** The teacher is able to perform this skill in a **very effective** manner.

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# Titles of the National Center's Performance-Based Teacher Education Modules

### Category A: Program Planning, Development, and Evaluation

- A-1 Prepare for a Community Survey
- A-2 Conduct a Community Survey
- A-3 Report the Findings of a Community Survey
- A-4 Organize an Occupational Advisory Committee
- A-5 Maintain an Occupational Advisory Committee
- A-6 Develop Program Goals and Objectives
- A-7 Conduct an Occupational Analysis
- A-8 Develop a Course of Study
- A-9 Develop Long-Range Program Plans
- A-10 Conduct a Student Follow-Up Study
- A-11 Evaluate Your Vocational Program

### Category B: Instructional Planning

- B-1 Determine Needs and Interests of Students
- B-2 Develop Student Performance Objectives
- B-3 Develop a Unit of Instruction
- B-4 Develop a Lesson Plan
- B-5 Select Student Instructional Materials
- B-6 Prepare Teacher-Made Instructional Materials

### Category C: Instructional Execution

- C-1 Direct Field Trips
- C-2 Conduct Group Discussions, Panel Discussions, and Symposiums
- C-3 Employ Brainstorming, Buzz Group, and Question Box Techniques
- C-4 Direct Students in Instructing Other Students
- C-5 Employ Simulation Techniques
- C-6 Guide Student Study
- C-7 Direct Student Laboratory Experience
- C-8 Direct Students in Applying Problem-Solving Techniques
- C-9 Employ the Project Method
- C-10 Introduce a Lesson
- C-11 Summarize a Lesson
- C-12 Employ Oral Questioning Techniques
- C-13 Employ Reinforcement Techniques
- C-14 Provide Instruction for Slower and More Capable Learners
- C-15 Present an Illustrated Talk
- C-16 Demonstrate a Manipulative Skill
- C-17 Demonstrate a Concept or Principle
- C-18 Individualize Instruction
- C-19 Employ the Team Teaching Approach
- C-20 Use Subject Matter Experts to Present Information
- C-21 Prepare Bulletin Boards and Exhibits
- C-22 Present Information with Models, Real Objects, and Flannel Boards
- C-23 Present Information with Overhead and Opaque Materials
- C-24 Present Information with Filmstrips and Slides
- C-25 Present Information with Films
- C-26 Present Information with Audio Recordings
- C-27 Present Information with Televised and Videotaped Materials
- C-28 Employ Programmed Instruction
- C-29 Present Information with the Chalkboard and Flip Chart
- C-30 Provide for Students' Learning Styles

### Category D: Instructional Evaluation

- D-1 Establish Student Performance Criteria
- D-2 Assess Student Performance: Knowledge
- D-3 Assess Student Performance: Attitudes
- D-4 Assess Student Performance: Skills
- D-5 Determine Student Grades
- D-6 Evaluate Your Instructional Effectiveness

### Category E: Instructional Management

- E-1 Project Instructional Resource Needs
- E-2 Manage Your Budgeting and Reporting Responsibilities
- E-3 Arrange for Improvement of Your Vocational Facilities
- E-4 Maintain a Filing System
- E-5 Provide for Student Safety
- E-6 Provide for the First Aid Needs of Students
- E-7 Assist Students in Developing Self-Discipline
- E-8 Organize the Vocational Laboratory
- E-9 Manage the Vocational Laboratory
- E-10 Combat Problems of Student Chemical Use

### Category F: Guidance

- F-1 Gather Student Data Using Formal Data-Collection Techniques
- F-2 Gather Student Data Through Personal Contacts
- F-3 Use Conferences to Help Meet Student Needs
- F-4 Provide Information on Educational and Career Opportunities
- F-5 Assist Students in Applying for Employment or Further Education

### Category G: School–Community Relations

- G-1 Develop a School–Community Relations Plan for Your Vocational Program
- G-2 Give Presentations to Promote Your Vocational Program
- G-3 Develop Brochures to Promote Your Vocational Program
- G-4 Prepare Displays to Promote Your Vocational Program
- G-5 Prepare News Releases and Articles Concerning Your Vocational Program
- G-6 Arrange for Television and Radio Presentations Concerning Your Vocational Program
- G-7 Conduct an Open House
- G-8 Work with Members of the Community
- G-9 Work with State and Local Educators
- G-10 Obtain Feedback about Your Vocational Program

### Category H: Vocational Student Organization

- H-1 Develop a Personal Philosophy Concerning Vocational Student Organizations
- H-2 Establish a Vocational Student Organization
- H-3 Prepare Vocational Student Organization Members for Leadership Roles
- H-4 Assist Vocational Student Organization Members in Developing and Financing a Yearly Program of Activities
- H-5 Supervise Activities of the Vocational Student Organization
- H-6 Guide Participation in Vocational Student Organization Contests

### Category I: Professional Role and Development

- I-1 Keep Up to Date Professionally
- I-2 Serve Your Teaching Profession
- I-3 Develop an Active Personal Philosophy of Education
- I-4 Serve the School and Community
- I-5 Obtain a Suitable Teaching Position
- I-6 Provide Laboratory Experiences for Prospective Teachers
- I-7 Plan the Student Teaching Experience
- I-8 Supervise Student Teachers

### Category J: Coordination of Cooperative Education

- J-1 Establish Guidelines for Your Cooperative Vocational Program
- J-2 Manage the Attendance, Transfers, and Terminations of Co-Op Students
- J-3 Enroll Students in Your Co-Op Program
- J-4 Secure Training Stations for Your Co-Op Program
- J-5 Place Co-Op Students on the Job
- J-6 Develop the Training Ability of On-the-Job Instructors
- J-7 Coordinate On-the-Job Instruction
- J-8 Evaluate Co-Op Students' On-the-Job Performance
- J-9 Prepare for Students' Related Instruction
- J-10 Supervise an Employer–Employee Appreciation Event

### Category K: Implementing Competency-Based Education (CBE)

- K-1 Prepare Yourself for CBE
- K-2 Organize the Content for a CBE Program
- K-3 Organize Your Class and Lab to Install CBE
- K-4 Provide Instructional Materials for CBE
- K-5 Manage the Daily Routines of Your CBE Program
- K-6 Guide Your Students Through the CBE Program

### Category L: Serving Students with Special/Exceptional Needs

- L-1 Prepare Yourself to Serve Exceptional Students
- L-2 Identify and Diagnose Exceptional Students
- L-3 Plan Instruction for Exceptional Students
- L-4 Provide Appropriate Instructional Materials for Exceptional Students
- L-5 Modify the Learning Environment for Exceptional Students
- L-6 Promote Peer Acceptance of Exceptional Students
- L-7 Use Instructional Techniques to Meet the Needs of Exceptional Students
- L-8 Improve Your Communication Skills
- L-9 Assess the Progress of Exceptional Students
- L-10 Counsel Exceptional Students with Personal–Social Problems
- L-11 Assist Exceptional Students in Developing Career Planning Skills
- L-12 Prepare Exceptional Students for Employability
- L-13 Promote Your Vocational Program with Exceptional Students

### Category M: Assisting Students in Improving Their Basic Skills

- M-1 Assist Students in Achieving Basic Reading Skills
- M-2 Assist Students in Developing Technical Reading Skills
- M-3 Assist Students in Improving Their Writing Skills
- M-4 Assist Students in Improving Their Oral Communication Skills
- M-5 Assist Students in Improving Their Math Skills
- M-6 Assist Students in Improving Their Survival Skills

### RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Student Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials
Resource Person Guide to Using Performance-Based Teacher Education Materials
Guide to the Implementation of Performance-Based Teacher Education
Performance-Based Teacher Education: The State of the Art, General Education and Vocational Education

**For information regarding availability and prices of these materials contact—AAVIM, American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials, 120 Driftmier Engineering Center, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602, (404) 542-2586**

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